



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Nicodemus National Historic Site**  
510 Washington Avenue, #B1  
Nicodemus, Kansas 67625

Former enslaved African Americans left Kentucky in organized colonies at the end of the post-Civil War Reconstruction period to experience freedom on the free soils of Kansas. Nicodemus represents the involvement of African Americans in the westward expansion and settlement of the Great Plains. It is the oldest and only remaining African American town west of the Mississippi River.

NICO\_Ranger\_Activities@nps.gov

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™**

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#### Editor

Dave Schafer, Acting Superintendent

#### NPS Contributors

Phyllis Howard, Park Ranger  
Michelle Huff, Park Ranger  
Will Pope, Park Guide

#### Partnering Contributors

Angela Bates, Nicodemus Hist. Society

Comments? Write to:  
Superintendent  
Nicodemus National Historic Site  
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## SPOTLIGHT ON “AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE FUND” PARKS

### MAGGIE L WALKER NHS - RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

In the decades following the Civil War, Maggie Walker became an advocate for racial equality and women's rights. She was the first African-American woman to start a bank, she published a newspaper, served on the board of the National Association of Colored Women, and was active in many charitable works. With her bank she was able to combat the oppression of Jim Crow laws by financially empowering African Americans. Her house at 110 1/2 East Leigh Street in Richmond became a center for her family as additions increased its size from 9 to 28 rooms to accommodate her sons and their families. In 1978 the house was designated a National Historic Site, and a year later the Walker family decided to sell the house and its contents to the National Park Service to ensure its continued preservation. The house has been restored to what it looked like in the 1930s and is open to the public for visitation.



*Image Courtesy National Park Service, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/mawa](http://www.nps.gov/mawa).*

## Park News

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# Flowering of Nicodemus

## From the Superintendent

### Nicodemus News

Dave Schafer  
Acting Superintendent

Serving as the park's acting superintendent over the last several months has been an honor. As a native Kansan, I'm especially delighted to help with the preservation and interpretation of Nicodemus. Many thanks to the community and park staff for making me feel welcome.

It's an exciting time to be here. Several noteworthy projects are well underway. Mark Weaver, the previous superintendent, put in place a solid foundation upon which the park and community can build toward the future. After the new superintendent is on board I will return to my regular duties in Topeka as chief of interpretation, education, and cultural resources at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site.

### Wayside Exhibits

As Mark Weaver reported in the last issue, the park is expanding the interpretation of the Nicodemus story with wayside exhibits and other media. Wayside exhibits are informational panels placed on the landscape to interpret the significance of what visitors are viewing. We are working with Angela Bates and the Nicodemus Historical Society to determine the location and topics for more than 30 wayside exhibits. Much of the story of Nicodemus is out on the farmland. We want to interpret that story, too. Plans are to locate the panels not only in town, but also in the countryside and cemeteries. Eventually, we envision that park visitors will use a driv-

ing tour brochure and their smart phones to experience Nicodemus in exciting new ways. Look for more updates in the coming months.

### Preservation Easements

The National Park Service (NPS) is in the process of obtaining preservation easements on the township hall, schoolhouse, and old First Baptist Church in Nicodemus. Acquiring an easement will give the NPS "interest in the property," which is a legal requirement so that federal money can be used to stabilize and repair these historic buildings that are privately owned. Property owners and the NPS have met and exchanged drafts of the easements. We hope to sign the easements soon. It's an important step for the park and community as we move forward in our shared stewardship of Nicodemus.

### Employment Opportunity

We plan to hire a temporary maintenance worker in the next couple of months. The position will be listed on [www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com) and the person will be brought on duty in 2013. For updates, call Joe Randall at 785-839-4321.

### Honoring Nicodemus Veterans

My appreciation for this community's many compelling stories has only grown during my time here. One of my most memorable days was on November 24 when Nicodemus honored its military veterans. Displays and presentations highlighted veterans who served from the Civil War to the Vietnam War. From Barrie Tompkins and Angela Bates's superb perfor-

mance of their Buffalo Soldier program to Tom Wellington's heartfelt description of his service in Vietnam, it was a day that those in attendance will long remember.

### New Superintendent Announced



Incoming Superintendent Angela Wetz. (NPS)

Angela Wetz will become the park's next superintendent. Angela started her government career with the Bureau of Land Management as a park ranger at Pompeys Pillar National Monument. After her graduation from Colorado State University she was a Natural Resource Specialist for the BLM in Dickinson, North Dakota and then for the Bureau of Reclamation at Canyon Ferry, Montana. In 2010 she came to the National Park Service as the Chief of Resource Management at Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming.

"I am honored to be selected as the superintendent of Nicodemus National Historic Site," said Angela. "I look forward to working with the staff, park partners, and surrounding communities to continue the mission of protecting and preserving the site's remarkable cultural significance."



# Around Town

## MIGRATION RE-ENACTMENT

By Angela Bate  
Nicodemus Historical Society

Twenty-eight descendants and Park Ranger Phyllis Howard traveled by chartered bus to Kentucky, September 6<sup>th</sup> for a re-enactment at Sadieville. It was 135 years and 3 days from the original date of departure, September 5, 1877 that the original settlers boarded the train heading for the Promised Lands of Kansas. Rev. Victor Williams, who portrayed town promoter and organizer Rev. Roundtree, led the group of re-enactors a half block and with song to the Sadieville train depot. Victor's father, Rev. Gene Williams of St. Louis, Missouri, also among the group of re-enactors, portrayed Tom Johnson, and Angela Bates, portrayed his wife Zerina. They were the great-great grandparents to most in the group. Tom and Zerina were former slaves of Vice-President Richard M. Johnson and the parents of Emma, Ella and Henry. Emma was pregnant when she left Kentucky and had the first baby born in Nicodemus. Emma was portrayed by Cheryl Jones. Descendent Steve

Jones portrayed her husband Charles Williams who remained in Kentucky until the following spring. Others in the group portrayed members of the Kirtley, Davenport, Vaughn, Baxter, Dorsey, Scott, Lilly, Niles, Moore, Wellington, and Welton families.

To most, this was their first time in Kentucky. The re-enactment was in the planning for two years and was coordinated by Angela Bates and Cindy Foster, Sadieville City Clerk.

On Sunday September 9<sup>th</sup>, descendants visited Mt. Olive Baptist and Stamping Ground Baptist churches, former religious homes to their ancestors. While in Stamping Ground, the group also participated in the unveiling of a Kentucky State Historical Marker at Stonetown. The marker commemorates the site of a restored slave cabin where former slaves and Kansas emigrants may have resided. The first stop for the group on Friday after arrival, and rest, was the Kentucky State Historical Society and Museum in Frankfort, where they toured and researched historical files. At the suggestion of descendant James

Bates, the group also toured the nearby bourbon distillery Buffalo Trace before leaving Frankfort.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, the descendants re-enacted the arrival of the settlers at Ellis, Kansas. House Representative candidate Phillip Martin portrayed town promoter W.R. Hill, who led the group to their final destination to Nicodemus. The re-enactment took place on a rainy morning in front of the Ellis depot.

The children's theme song "Kentucky to Kansas," written by Connie Florence and Regina Thomas, was performed by the group and led by Thomas during both re-enactments. A final re-enactment of the first settler's arrival in Nicodemus is planned for the 2013 annual Emancipation Celebration in July.

Our annual tree trimming party was on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Visitors enjoyed refreshments and decorated Christmas tumbleweeds for display. If you missed it we have tumbleweeds and supplies left, so stop by the Township Hall and bring your holiday creativity!



Descendants pose for a group photo at the migration reenactment in Kentucky. (NPS)

# Around the Park

## Regional Deputy Director Visits

National Park Service

Patty Trap, Deputy Director of the Midwest Region of the National Park Service, led an NPS delegation from Omaha, NE, on November 8. Patty viewed the site and elicited feedback from descendants and staff on qualities desired in the next superintendent as well as suggestions on how the park could be improved. Also in attendance were Clara Wooden, Associate Regional Director of Equal Employment Opportunity, Civil Rights, Diversity, and Recruitment; Roberta Wendel, Regional Interpretive Media Specialist; and David Smith, Superintendent of Brown v. Board of Education NHS in Topeka.

It was announced that Nicodemus NHS will be partnering with Brown v. Board of Education NHS as a way to share resources so that both can better serve the public in telling the story of our nation's journey to civil rights. The meeting also reviewed the progress of planned waysides and highlighted the urgency of finalizing facade easements before allotted funding for building improvements expires. Deputy Director Trap voiced concern about the condition of the structures, citing the need to preserve them for future generations, and she hopes agreements can be reached that will allow the National Park Service to invest in restoration.

## Community and Park Benefits From Volunteer Efforts

By Michelle Huff  
National Park Service

On September 26, 2012, "Make A Difference Day," a group of twelve students from Hill City High School and their two sponsors volunteered their time and effort at Nicodemus NHS and certainly made a difference. They spent the morning cleaning the Township Hall, cleaning the park



Regional Deputy Director Patty Trap gathering feedback at the November 8th meeting. (Will Pope, NPS)

headquarters windows and washing the two park vehicles. In the afternoon, they worked on more "make a difference" projects in Nicodemus and at the Nicodemus Villa Apartments. At the end of their day long service, the group was presented with Volunteers-In-Parks Certificates, VIP lapel pins, and VIP pens.

We are very grateful to Samantha Brown, Leo Cai, Katie Couey, Jordon Cox, Jacob Edgell, Ethan Gansel, Domi Hall, Christie Johnson, Courtney Lawellin, Morgan McCullough, Ashley Strathman, Solomon Wilson, Esther Clark, and Kyle Jilka for their service to Nicodemus and the NPS.

## New To Town

By Will Pope  
National Park Service

If you've seen a new face around town sitting atop an oversized body dressed in green and grey, chances are you've already caught a glimpse of your new neighbor and park guide. If not, let me introduce myself.

I'm a proud Kansan! In 2004 I graduated from Topeka High, in 2010 I graduated from Manhattan Christian College, and I'm slowly working on a



New Park Guide Will Pope. (NPS)

## DID YOU KNOW.....

Did you know that Reverend Joseph D. Wilson was the pastor of the Nicodemus AME Church from the early 1920s until the mid-1960s, and was also one of the Nicodemus postmasters? He passed away on January 21, 1965.